

**Governor Mitt Romney**  
**State of the State Address**  
**January 15, 2004**

President Travaglini, Speaker Finneran, Lieutenant Governor Healey, Secretary of State Galvin, Attorney General Reilly, Treasurer Cahill, Auditor DeNucci, Minority Leader Lees, Minority Leader Jones, members of the General Court, Mayor Menino, Archbishop O'Malley and distinguished guests and friends: Thank you for joining me this evening.

Will you also welcome my chief advisor and counselor, Ann Romney, and members of my family.

And a special thank you to the citizens of Massachusetts: You are paying all the taxes, creating all the jobs, raising all the children. This government is yours. Thank you for letting me serve you. I love this job.

Standing here, surrounded by the murals and names of our first citizens, like John Adams and John Hancock, I'm reminded that our country was founded on a revolutionary principle; instead of the state being pre-eminent, the individual would be. We bow not to kings, but to the inalienable rights of man. Here in America, the citizen chooses and the government serves.

When we politicians forget that the people come first, we forget the great lesson of America. And, we begin to hear calls for reform. Quite simply, reform is about putting people first.

Putting people first is harder than it sounds. We have to put people we don't know ahead of political friends we do know, schoolchildren ahead of teacher unions and taxpayers ahead of special interests.

I'm pleased that over the last year, people of good will in both parties took action to reform government and to make it more responsive. For that I thank you.

A year ago, our state was facing a fiscal crisis. Today, I am proud to report that the state of our Commonwealth is much stronger. We're moving again, with purpose and determination, in the right direction. We can, and we must, be even stronger next year.

Last year, we tackled the crisis by restructuring bureaucracies. We eliminated longstanding duplication. We refused to pass along our financial problems to the citizens. Instead, we produced a balanced budget on time and without raising taxes.

Make no mistake, these are still difficult times. We still face deficits. We still face hard choices. But, if we stay on the road of reform, placing the interests of people first, we can do some good things this year, some very good things.

Let me tell you what I have in mind.

If you are at home right now, watching this with your family, take a look at the faces of your children. You are looking into the faces of our future.

What legacy will we leave our children? I am convinced that our legacy should be a legacy of learning.

Massachusetts has some of the best schools and teachers in the nation. Education reform, adopted a decade ago, raised standards and closed funding gaps. But it was the first step, not the last. Let us now take every step, to prepare every child, for an ever more competitive future.

Today, I am announcing a *Legacy of Learning* initiative. I believe that a true legacy of learning can only come from a comprehensive effort, committed to the child every step of the way.

Let's start with our school buildings. I am asking the Legislature to work with me to launch an ambitious school building program.

We're horribly backlogged in renovating and rebuilding old and dilapidated schools. I will propose a series of construction reforms and a refinancing program that will jump start over 100 new and remodeled school projects.

Let's start building and renovating these new classrooms now.

Great new school buildings aren't enough. We need to face up to the reality that some of our schools are just not educating our children.

Some schools are seeing as many as one-third of their students drop out of high school before the end of their senior year. Some have disappointingly low MCAS scores. An achievement gap persists. For these kids, doors to the future are slammed shut. That is simply unacceptable.

Our *Legacy of Learning* initiative provides emergency support for the bottom tenth of our school districts, where almost one third of our kids go to school.

First, the state will fund full day kindergarten in every one of these districts that doesn't have it.

Second, we will provide \$20 million in additional funding for after school and summer school special help sessions.

Third, parents of children in our troubled schools need to get more involved.

I propose to establish a mandatory parent preparation course to teach parents how they can support their child in school and how they can foster the discipline and hard work that are the cornerstone of education.

Fourth, *Legacy of Learning* will provide \$5 million in grants for discipline programs. With programs tailored for chronically disruptive youth, we will take discipline problems out of the classroom so they are no longer in the way of those kids who really want to learn.

Fifth, *Legacy of Learning* devotes \$3 million to train, recruit, and reward teachers who specialize in math and science.

Finally, my initiative will insist that principals be given the authority to remove any teacher that cannot succeed with our kids. That won't happen very often because the great majority of our teachers are terrific. But giving the principal the authority to hire and fire will put the principal, and the parents, back in charge of their school.

My *Legacy of Learning* initiative doesn't stop with high school. We're fortunate to have excellent public colleges and universities. But many families are having a very difficult time paying for them. And I can't stand seeing so many of our best students going off to attend college in other states.

I want our best and brightest to stay right here in Massachusetts – students like Linette Heredia.

Linette is an honors student at Lawrence High School. She earned a perfect score on the English portion of the MCAS, which is all the more impressive since her family's native language is Spanish. She's number two in her class. She's here with us tonight.

Linette, would you please stand?

Linette, we want you to stay in Massachusetts.

More than 200 years ago, John Adams wrote in the Massachusetts Constitution that our rights and liberties depend on the wisdom and knowledge of our people.

So for Linette and thousands like her, our *Legacy of Learning* initiative will provide funding for the *John and Abigail Adams Scholarship Program*.

Students who score among the top one-quarter of those who take the MCAS will be given four years at the University of Massachusetts or any state or community college, tuition free.

There's more. Any student who scores in the top 10 percent will be given four years of free tuition and a \$2,000 annual payment to help pay for fees. This Adams Scholarship Program will cost about \$50 million a year by year four.

And it's worth every dime.

My total budget for K-12 education will grow by over \$100 million and higher education will grow by over \$70 million.

*Legacy of Learning* puts people first, kids first. We'll be putting our money where our future is.

I know when our minds turn to education we also think of local aid. In my budget, I am proposing a modest increase in local aid. Cities and towns have worked hard to pare back their expenditures to match falling revenues. We owe our mayors and municipal officials a sincere thank you.

The largest portion of our state budget is Health and Human Services. It will grow by approximately \$500 million. Some will say that's not enough, but I believe it's the right amount. A half a billion dollars is a very big number. We will continue to be one of the most generous states in the country when it comes to providing for those in need.

Now, you may ask, how can we do these things in such difficult financial circumstances, when we are looking at a budget gap of over \$1 billion for the next year?

First, we can do these things because we will keep marching down the road to reform. When we eliminate waste in government, we can do more for people.

I'll ask the Legislature – again – to merge the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority with the Highway Department. That alone will save over \$20 million a year and another \$190 million in one-time money.

We don't need two sets of managers, two legal departments, two public relations departments, and two sets of books to manage one set of highways. We don't need the Turnpike Authority selling off key assets critical to our state.

We don't need fancy celebration parties.

We don't need a Turnpike thinking about building a pie-in-the-sky monorail.

And we sure don't need to pay toll takers more than we pay teachers!

Our choice is this: Do we waste \$20 million of taxpayer money every year on two highway departments or do we invest in scholarships, schools and teachers?

Let's choose our children.

There are many other areas ripe for reform.

The cost of construction in Massachusetts for schools and other municipal and state buildings is 20 percent higher than that in other states, even adjusting for our higher wages.

This excess is due to burdensome construction and bidding rules. Modernize these provisions and we can afford to build more schools with the money we save.

We need to reform state and municipal employment practices as well.

Right now, we virtually prohibit any private employer from competing for state work: state workers are given a monopoly. And monopolies mean inefficiency, waste and excess.

Competition brings out the best in everybody. And here in Massachusetts, we're not afraid to compete. Just ask our New England Patriots.

I'll propose other reforms as well. I'll look to appropriate state funds based on need, not politics. But in addition to reform, I'll balance our budget by paring back programs I believe are unnecessary, prone to abuse or simply lower priority.

I will present a balanced budget. And in case anybody has any other ideas, let me be clear about one more thing: I will not raise taxes.

Higher taxes kill good jobs and drive away employers. A lot of people have been out of work for too long. Keeping and creating good jobs will always be highest priority.

I'm growing more optimistic about the jobs outlook for Massachusetts.

Let me tell you why.

Before I became Governor, I was a businessman. I helped create new companies and fix broken ones.

I know a little bit about what attracts employers – and what drives them away.

And I'm proud to report that employers are coming and growing in Massachusetts – well known companies like Cisco Systems, 3Com, Fuji and JetBlue.

Others may not be as well known yet, but they are just as important: Silver Line, Bowstreet, Lifeline Systems, Analogic, STARBAK Communications and Therion Biologics among many others.

Just the companies I've had the chance to personally welcome are together adding thousands of jobs in Massachusetts. We have the best workers, we have the leading technology and we have a state that doesn't just love jobs: We in Massachusetts love job creators.

When we find barriers to job creation, we have to take them down. Right now, the most positive action the Legislature can take to keep and grow jobs is to reform the unemployment insurance system. We have become the most expensive state in the nation and that will cost us jobs.

We can't afford to delay any longer.

Now is also the time to tackle our housing crisis. Our housing is expensive for one primary reason: We don't build enough of it.

I look forward to working with the Democratic and Republican leadership and the members of the Legislature to create new laws that remove the barriers to building more housing. I am committed to doubling the number of housing starts in Massachusetts. We simply must make housing more plentiful and more affordable for all our citizens.

We must also continue to honor and respect those of the Greatest Generation as they get older. One of the great travesties in our state is the number of seniors that are in nursing homes who could, with a little help, still be in their own homes and still be productive.

We need to give seniors the help they need to stay in their homes for as long as possible – we owe the Greatest Generation at least that much.

Too many families in our Commonwealth struggle to pay the high cost of rising auto insurance bills.

Our system is so inefficient that most of the major national insurance companies won't do business here. So, our premiums just keep going up. This is the year for auto insurance reform.

Finally, I want to pay a special tribute tonight to the men and women who are fighting to protect our freedom. Several thousand guardsmen, reservists and active duty personnel from Massachusetts have placed our liberty above their lives in Afghanistan, Iraq, Guantanamo Bay and other dangerous places.

Sixteen brave men of Massachusetts have died since the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, far away from homes, far away from family, for you and for me.

Dan Petithory; Jose Feliciano; Matthew Boule; Brian McPhillips; Benjamin Sammis; Justin Garvey; Charles Caldwell; Joseph Camara; Robert Rooney; Evan O'Neill; Joseph Bellavia; John Hart; Kyran Kennedy; Scott Rose; Glenn Allison; and Theodore Perreault.

Many of their family members are with us tonight. These heroes we remember, we extol, we salute.

Tonight, I'm optimistic about our future. We can make critical investments in our children, in our economy and in our housing. But we'll have to put people first.

We started down the road to reform last year. This is no time to take our foot off the gas pedal. The people who elected us deserve the best government we can give them.

The people of Massachusetts must come first.

Thank you.